



# Let's Talk About Stroke and Aphasia

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## What is aphasia?

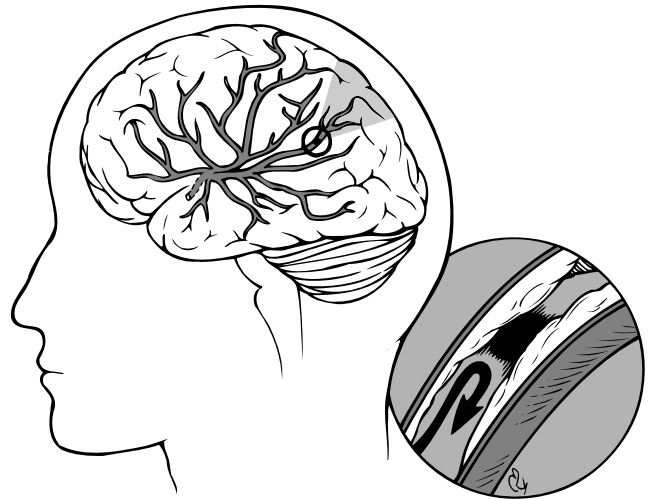
Aphasia (ah-FA-ze-ah) is a language disorder that affects the ability to communicate. It's most often caused by a stroke that affects the left part of the brain, which controls language. (See figure.)

### **Aphasia does not affect intelligence.**

Stroke survivors remain mentally alert, even though their speech may be jumbled, fragmented or impossible to understand. Some survivors continue to have

- Trouble speaking.
- Trouble finding words.
- Problems understanding what others say.
- Problems with reading, writing or math.
- Inability to process long words and infrequently used words.

Blocked artery in the brain prevents blood flow.



When you have a clot in a blood vessel in your brain, you can have a stroke. If the stroke affects the part of your brain that knows language, you could have aphasia.

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## How does it feel to have aphasia?

People with aphasia are often frustrated and confused because they can't speak or understand things the way they did before their stroke. They may act differently because of changes in their brain.

Imagine looking at the headlines of the morning newspaper and not being able to

recognize the words; or trying to say "put the car in the garage" and it comes out "put the train in the house" or "widdle tee car ung sender plissen." Thousands of alert, intelligent men and women find themselves suddenly plunged into a world of jumbled communication because of aphasia.

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## Are there different types of aphasia?

Yes, there are several forms of aphasia. They include:

- **Global aphasia** — Someone with this type of aphasia may be completely unable to speak, name objects, repeat phrases or follow commands.
- **Broca's aphasia** — The person knows what they want to say, but can't find the right words.
- **Wernicke's aphasia** — A person with this aphasia can seldom comprehend what is being said or control what they're saying.

## How can family and friends help?

The stroke survivor with aphasia and family members will need the help and support of a doctor, counselor and speech pathologist. It's a good idea for family and friends to:

- Always assume that the stroke survivor can hear. Check understanding with yes/no questions.
- Set up a daily routine for the person with aphasia that includes rest and time to practice skills.
- Use sentences that are short and to the point.
- Keep the noise level down and stand where the survivor can see you.
- Remember to treat the stroke survivor as an adult and let him or her share in decision-making. No one likes to be ignored. Include the survivor in your conversation.
- Help the stroke survivor cope with feelings of frustration and depression.






## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets available.
- For more information on stroke, or to receive additional fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American

Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:

- ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers, trained to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area
- ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection Magazine*, a free publication for stroke survivors and caregivers

## What are the Warning Signs of Stroke?

-  **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
-  **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
-  **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
-  **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
-  **Sudden, severe headaches with no known cause**



Learn to recognize a stroke.  
*Because time lost is brain lost.*

Today there are treatments that can reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly – within 3 hours of your first symptoms.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience these warning signs!

## Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider:

How long is therapy needed?

Will my aphasia go away?

How can I find a stroke or aphasia support group?

What can I do to continue to improve my skills when speech therapy ends?

*The statistics in this kit were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at [americanheart.org/statistics](http://americanheart.org/statistics).*

*The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. Your contributions will support research and educational programs that help reduce disability and death from stroke.*

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